

MACAULAY'S THIRD CHAPTER

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time/¹ and the fact that It produces this impression shows that the description is a caricature. Any one familiar with the domestic correspondence of the period will form a more favourable Impression of the manners and intelligence of the country gentry. Collections of correspondence such as that contained In the Memoirs of the Verney family, or those calendared In the volumes of the Historical Manuscripts Commission,² prove that there were many families with habits and ideals as high as those of the corresponding class In Macaulay's own time.

Macaulay also omits to state clearly the nature and the importance of the public services which the country gentry performed. He speaks of them as magistrates dispensing to those who dwelt near them ^f a rude patriarchal justice | but says nothing of the functions of the magistrates in quarter-sessions. Yet the whole system of local administration depended upon the efficiency with which they discharged their multifarious functions,³ and generally speaking they did so with considerable energy and a fair amount of success. Since Macaulay wrote, the publication of various calendars of the quarter-sessions records, and the researches of local historians, have elucidated this

*i, 311.

- Notably the Harley papers in the Duke of Portland's MSS., vols. iii-vi

(1894-1901), and the Le Fleming MSS.

³¹ The repairing of bridges, the maintenance of the king's gaols, the building and management of the newer houses of correction, the fixing of wages, prices and rates of land carriage, the licensing of various kinds of traders, the suppression of disorderly houses, the sanctioning of special levies for various parish needs, the confirmation or disallowance of the orders of individual justices or pairs of justices on every conceivable subject, were among the multifarious civil functions of Quarter Sessions/ S. and B. Webb, *The Parish and the County* (1906), pp. 296-7. This admirable work deals with the period after the Revolution, but conditions were much the same during the second half of the seventeenth century as during the first part of the eighteenth.